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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

The President
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
John H. Holdridge, NSC Staff
Winston Lord, NSC Staff

Prime Minister Chou En-lai
Ch'iao Kuan-hua, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs
Chang Wen-chin, Director of Western Europe, North
American, and Australasian Ministry of Foreign
Affairs
Wang Hai-jung, Deputy Director of Protocol
Chao Chi-hua, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Chi Chao-chu, Interpreter
T'ang Wen-sheng, Interpreter
Two Notetakers

DATE & TIME:

Thursday, February 24, 1972 - 5:15p.m. - 8:05p.m.

PLACE:

Great Hall of the People, Peking

Prime Minister Chou: You took a rather tiring trip to the Great Wall this morning.

President Nixon: Nothing is tiring that is interesting.

Prime Minister Chou: How about Mrs. Nixon?

President Nixon: She loved it.

Prime Minister Chou: Was it cold?

President Nixon: No, it was a beautiful day. We didn't need the big coats.

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Prime Minister Chou: As to what kind of proper formulation to find on the Taiwan case, you two will work that out. Only after that is solved, can we very well agree to hold a plenary meeting to discuss the matter.

President Nixon: Absolutely.

Prime Minister Chou: After we solve the question.

President Nixon: This is a matter we should solve between ourselves and not put in a big meeting.

Prime Minister Chou: That is true.

President Nixon: We have to sell our people, Rogers and Green. That is our problem. That is Dr. Kissinger's job. (Prime Minister Chou laughs.) But not in a plenary session.

Prime Minister Chou: I would like to discuss another matter. Of course, we are only having an exchange of views. The second question then is Indochina. As for Indochina, you know about the proposal of the Indochinese. We support this proposal.

President Nixon: The seven points.

Prime Minister Chou: We support the seven points of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, and also the two point elaboration, and also the Joint Declaration of the Summit Conference of the Indochinese Peoples. That is quite clear.

And if the war there continues, whether after the withdrawal of American forces or whether there are still some American forces left and the war goes on, we will continue our support, not only to Vietnam but to all three Indochinese countries. That is inevitable.

Thirdly, if the U.S. completely disinvolves itself and it becomes primarily a civil war, we would still support the sides which we are supporting, whether in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. That has been our position all along and we will not change it. Of course, we hope the war will stop. But your two sides have not yet found a way out, and we cannot meddle in this. We can only wait. And we have repeatedly made clear that we only have the duty to support them, not the duty to negotiate on their behalf. This has already been made clear in the four points.

But I would like to say something which was not put into the communique. Nor is it a view that we want to impose on you; it is only our view. And that is, Mr. President, for a leader like you, who is known for your farsightedness, it would not be beneficial for you or for the honor of the United States to leave behind a "tail," although you are still determined to carry out the withdrawal of 500,000 troops. Because there are people in Saigon and Phnom Penh who are not reliable friends, in the end the people will cast them aside. The war there might be dragged out.

President Nixon: What does the Prime Minister mean by a "tail?" Does he mean American military forces?

Prime Minister Chou: Yes. The "tail" means American forces. You have already said that if there is no agreement with them, then the Air Force bombing and the Navy bombing will continue, and you will continue to help them with transportation.

President Nixon: I appreciate the Prime Minister's frankness. He knows we have a difficult position, in the sense that the Prime Minister mentioned, that we came here with many saying that we were going to get help from the Prime Minister's government in ending the Vietnam war. Of course, what the Prime Minister is telling us is that he cannot help us in Vietnam.

Prime Minister Chou: That is, your opponents are trying to make use of that as a campaign slogan, the Democratic Committee.

President Nixon: Obviously what will be said, even with a skillful communique, is what the People's Republic of China wanted from us was movement on Taiwan and it got it; and what we wanted was help on Vietnam, and we got nothing.

Understand that I realize what the Prime Minister's position is, but I do want him to know it does cause problems for us. I have never, as Dr. Kissinger can tell you, I have never given any encouragement to Congressional leaders before coming here on Vietnam. On the contrary, I said the Prime Minister's government has a very difficult problem on this, and we would settle Vietnam in our own way.

Dr. Kissinger: You put that in your State of the World Report also.

Prime Minister Chou: What is more, it is said in the four points of common ground (in the communique), that you would not represent any third parties in talks.

President Nixon: I want the Prime Minister to know that naturally we have to do what is necessary to defend our interests, to protect our forces and get back our prisoners. I realize that the Prime Minister's government may have to react to what we do. We will do nothing that we do not consider necessary to accomplish our goal. And our goal is an eventual withdrawal after the return of our prisoners. But if we cannot get negotiations, it is not we, but the North Vietnamese who have forced us to continue to use military action.

But the settlement of Vietnam, Mr. Prime Minister, is inevitable because I have made a decision. But it must be done in the right way. It won't be with us very much longer.

Interpreter: You mean withdrawal?

President Nixon: Yes. Completion of American withdrawal.

But as I have said, I emphasize that it must be done in the right way. We are not going to engage in unilateral withdrawal without accomplishing the objectives of our policy there.

Prime Minister Chou: But that makes things rather complicated. Because your policy is not something started by your government, but by your predecessors. In the first place, there was no need to send American forces in. When you did send them in more and more were sent in, and you got yourself bogged down. And so your present government was compelled to want to bring about withdrawal, and you found this unfortunate problem on your hands.

As for the release of the prisoners of war, they are bound to be released. That is the natural thing. But there are also some exceptions, like India. They have captured so many prisoners of war from Pakistan and want to keep them for bargaining.

President Nixon: That is what North Vietnam is doing to us.

Prime Minister Chou: In talking about prisoners of war, I want to mention something. It happened while you were Vice President and you may not be clear about that. We exercised great control over ourselves. It is a good thing, after all that President Eisenhower brought an end to the war in Korea. But your prisoners of war and the prisoners of war of other countries on your side were all released by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. But as for our prisoners of war, quite a large number of them, Chiang Kai-shek sent people to work with them who engaged in all kinds of special activities in the prisoner of war camps in South Korea. The formal repatriation of prisoners was done under the supervision of an international commission with India as chairman. And there was a so-called screening process set up - a small cubicle - and they let prisoners come in one door, asked them if they wanted to go back to Taiwan and then let them out the other door. Under those circumstances, under armed threat to their person, it was not really possible for these prisoners to say what they wanted to say. Many of those prisoners were sent to Taiwan; some fled and then came back to the mainland.

We could have made a big issue, and say: "What right does Chiang Kai-shek have to meddle in this matter of repatriating prisoners?" Because both sides wanted to terminate the conflict, and we sent only volunteers there, we thought it was not good to insist that the war continue over the question of prisoners. The number of our prisoners who were coerced to go to Taiwan was not in thousands, but up to ten thousand or more. But we tolerated that.

So whenever there is war things cannot be the same. For us at that time although it was a matter of principle, as far as we were concerned we thought the best thing was to end the war. I just say that much. It is a matter of history, but something very much in our hearts. But when prisoners of ours went to Taiwan, it was still Chinese territory. Maybe some of them went into the Chiang Kai-shek army. Most of them now are quite old, and some have fled back to the mainland.

President Nixon: With regard to Vietnam, if I may just add one point. We understand the Prime Minister's position. However, we would hope, while he cannot say he can interfere in this situation, that he would at least not do what the Soviets appear to be doing, that he would not encourage the North Vietnamese to refuse to negotiate.

The problem is the Soviet Union wants the U.S. to be tied down in Vietnam. It doesn't want our involvement to end. It appears to be discouraging the North Vietnamese from negotiating. I do not ask the Prime Minister to respond, but if they are discouraged from negotiating by both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic, this poses a problem.

Prime Minister Chou: When the Johnson Administration, at the beginning, announced the bombing halt in 1968, at that time we were not very much for the Paris negotiations. At that time we felt it was not very opportune, but after 1969 our position changed to supporting the negotiations. In fact, in order to help the Paris negotiations bear fruit, we stopped the Warsaw Talks. And then, it was only later because of what happened in a fashion show in the Yugoslav Embassy in Warsaw that these talks again started. And they told us something about what was going on in negotiations. From that time onwards we were for negotiations because in fighting there is also bound to be negotiations, such as in the Korean War.

Mr. Ch'iao Kuan-hua also took part in the Korean negotiations which went on for over two years. Finally an armistice agreement was achieved in 1953.

The channel of negotiations should not be closed. We can only go so far. We cannot meddle into their affairs.

I will tell you a story. That is with regard to Cambodia, as I see it, Prince Sihanouk is quite an intelligent man.

President Nixon: I knew him.

Prime Minister Chou: And a patriot. And I believe that he is quite different from Lon Nol or Sirik Matak or Son Ngoc Tanh. Of course, as they are in a state of war it is quite inevitable, natural for Prince Sihanouk to ally himself with leftist forces in Cambodia. But they have their own independent policies. Although some members of Prince Sihanouk's

government are in Peking we have never meddled in their affairs. He has already written over 30 messages and published these for his people. And we offer him free access to the People's Daily for publishing.

He writes his messages entirely according to his own thinking. His ideology is completely different from ours. Dr. Kissinger knows that and so will the President. On this point our freedom of speech is greater than any other country. He has now been in China almost two years. The articles that he has published in the People's Daily could be compiled in to thick books. The number of articles and statements issued by any of us could not exceed his. Why? Because he is a patriot. So we support him. He is neither a communist nor a socialist nor a Marxist, but a patriot.

So as we continue to have a mutual understanding with each other I like to tell you that this is our position.

President Nixon: We. . . .

Prime Minister Chou: You know, Senator Mansfield is a close friend of Sihanouk.

President Nixon: I met Sihanouk twice in 1953.

Prime Minister Chou: In Phnom Penh?

President Nixon: In Phnom Penh, and also when he came to Washington in early 1953. No one believes this, but it was not our policy that deposed him in Cambodia.

Prime Minister Chou: (Laughs) We had a dispute about that with Dr. Kissinger.

President Nixon: I think that if he had a closeness to China, this would not hurt Sihanouk, but his closeness to the North Vietnamese hurt him because the Cambodians hate the North Vietnamese. That is my analysis; I realize it is not the same as the Prime Minister's. But I think that is what happened.

If the North Vietnamese would get out of Cambodia, then the Cambodians could determine whether they might want Sihanouk back. But as long as they are in Cambodia, I think there is very little chance of his returning to power. That's just my view, but we have no way to control that event.

Prime Minister Chou: As our method of analysis differs, so we cannot come to the same conclusion. Because as we see it, the Johnson Administration sent American forces to suppress patriots in South Vietnam, and under these circumstances how can you refuse their compatriots in the north coming south to assist their brothers in the south?

President Nixon: I think I can understand this although I oppose it. I can understand North Vietnamese going into the south; it's all Vietnam. But North Vietnam has no business going into Cambodia. The Cambodians always fought the North Vietnamese, all Vietnamese. There is no justification to their going into Cambodia. That's my way of thinking. But I am afraid what we say here will not affect it.

Prime Minister Chou: It is a question of historical perspective, because the French colonialists linked together the three Indochina countries and linked their interests together. The very word "Indochina" was given by the French. Before there was no such name. There was no such name before. They are three separate countries in history. China's relations with Vietnam were very close; second, we had ties with Cambodia by sea; there was not so much relations with Laos.

It was French colonialism which linked their interests. Then there was the question of redrawing boundary lines by the French, which enhanced the contradictions between the three countries, like the British in Africa.

President Nixon: The McMahon Line (Prime Minister Chou laughs).

Prime Minister Chou: And then after Japanese were defeated, the French returned and again occupied the three countries of Indochina, and that again linked the three peoples together to fight French colonialism. After the 1954 agreements, the three countries were again separated. Only then did we come to know the situation in the three countries; before we

knew little about them, only Vietnam. President Ho Chi Minh was on very close terms with us.

And after the Geneva Conference, if the then American Government had not sabotaged the Geneva Agreements, the situation would have been different. Vietnam would have been unified. Cambodia probably would have remained under Prince Sihanouk. As for Laos, that situation is different, but would have been solved by the 1962 Geneva Accords on Laos.

But then during the Johnson Administration, Johnson sent so many forces into South Vietnam -- if you look merely at the numbers, the physical strength, they exceed the South Vietnamese armed forces and also the North Vietnamese armed forces. These were circumstances that were well known throughout the world. Even the American people talked about them, as did the Chinese people.

And because of that, the Vietnamese forces made use of Cambodia as a place for troop movements and cover but we only came to know about that in 1969. The fact was that Prince Sihanouk sympathized with the Vietnamese troops and allowed them to pass through Cambodia because in the days of resistance against French colonialism they were together. So that sympathy expressed by Prince Sihanouk for North Vietnam should be understandable.

So if the war comes to an end, the Vietnamese forces will surely withdraw from Cambodia, and Cambodia will be Cambodian.

President Nixon: The Prime Minister stated that the principle of the People's Republic is not to intervene militarily with armed forces in neighboring states. Does the Prime Minister then oppose North Vietnamese domination of Cambodia and Laos by military forces? That is our position.

Prime Minister Chou: It is only because the war had already broken out, the war was given rise to by the U.S., that they are conducting their operations there.

President Nixon: When the war is over, does the Prime Minister believe that North Vietnam should get out of Cambodia and get out of Laos?

Prime Minister Chou: If the war is completely stopped, that is to say a reversion of Cambodia to Prince Sihanouk, then the North Vietnamese will surely withdraw. If there is still Lon Nol in Cambodia, that is not possible. Because even the majority of the Cambodians themselves do not support Lon Nol. He is someone imposed from the outside.

I still maintain on the Indochina question you made a mistake. Of course, that is not the responsibility of your government. Because at that time that region could have become a region of peace and neutrality, or at least two-thirds of the region could have become that. But because of John Foster Dulles' policy of drawing lines here and there and sabotaging the Geneva Agreements, the whole thing turned into a mess. That was borne out by Anthony Eden in his memoirs. The agreements arrived at in Geneva explicitly stipulated a plebiscite after two years, but Dulles said that was just for domestic consumption.

So if we are to bring about an area of peace and neutrality, not only for the three countries of Indochina but for Southeast Asia as a whole and friendly to the area as a whole, I think the time is not too late to do that. Otherwise there will be no tranquility. I mean not just Indochina, but Southeast Asia -- Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines. There is that tendency now in those countries. We should help them in that direction, to gain independence in that way.

But in that case, Mr. President, you might say that another power vacuum would be built up, and it would complicate the situation. Anyway, you know that we would not go in those places. You admit that. Our conviction is that if trouble arises the people will fill up the vacuum. In the first meeting I discussed that; but, of course, the timing may not be so quick. It depends on the political consciousness of the people in each country.

So indeed there is a possibility that in a particular country if the people have not yet risen up, a certain big power will go there and set up a sphere of influence. We have that in our communique, (reading from the communique).

President Nixon: We have a different view. As I told the Prime Minister we respect his views. Regarding Vietnam, the North Vietnamese have rejected

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our eight-point proposal. It is a good one which could bring about the very goal the Prime Minister is describing of a neutral Indochina, as far as the neutrality of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam is concerned. I will say that this is our problem now, and I will solve it in the right way.

I am glad that the Prime Minister's government will not try to discourage the North Vietnamese from negotiating. That is the best way to solve it rather than by solving it militarily.

Prime Minister Chou: Then here is a concrete question, just an isolated problem. They said they wanted to continue negotiations. You said no on the 17th of this month and then agreed to the 24th. The reason you refused was because of the Peoples' Conference in Versailles.

Dr. Kissinger: We felt it was not appropriate for negotiations. They are meeting today.

President Nixon: Right. We will be very forthcoming in trying to negotiate, but we cannot be dictated to on this issue by North Vietnam. We are not trying to dictate to them. They are not trying to negotiate. They say here it is, take it or leave it and that we cannot accept. If the talk reasonably, as the Prime Minister and I are talking, though we disagree we could find common ground. This could have been settled two years ago when secret talks started, but they won't talk that way. Right, Henry?

Prime Minister Chou: You have held 12 secret meetings?

Dr. Kissinger: Right, but once there were two meetings in one day so we counted them as one. (Chou laughs.)

Prime Minister Chou: Another question is Korea.

President Nixon: Korea?

Prime Minister Chou: Korea. We of course appreciate the gradual reduction of your forces in Korea.

President Nixon: We are down by one third already.

Prime Minister Chou: Time is already up. I will say two more words. We can have more talks tomorrow. In fact I have more than two words. Let us continue tomorrow, because Mrs. Nixon is coming. It is better to stop because Mrs. Nixon is coming right away. We can go on tomorrow.

President Nixon: Or 3 o'clock tonight. (Prime Minister Chou laughs.)

Dr. Kissinger: He will accept--he kept me working the whole night once.

Prime Minister Chou: You can have night work with the Vice Minister after the duck dinner. Mr. President wants to see the former Imperial Palace tomorrow.

(As the parties left the table, there was discussion on future plenary and private sessions.)